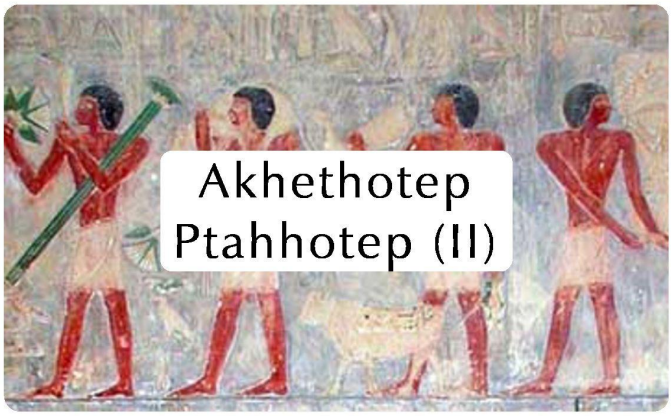
The mastaba of Akhethotep  and Ptahhotep ,
mastaba D64





The mastaba of Akhethotep and Ptahhotep, mastaba D64





The mastaba designated D64 is located in the north-west part of the necropolis of Saqqara, to the west of the step pyramid of Djoser. It constitutes the most important element of a much vaster domestic funerary complex and was the common burial of two high commissioners from the end of the Vth Dynasty, vizier Akhethotep and his son Ptahhotep. The monument was discovered by Mariette at the time of the excavations which he had undertaken in 1850. The only detailed documentation is that produced by Norman de Garis Davies, at the beginning of the 20th century, but since then the mastaba has undergone a great degree of reconstruction.

A modern ramp provides access to a courtyard area with entrances to two mastabas. Turning to the left, the entrance to D64 is located at the southern end, facing north. Immediately in front of the ramp is the mastaba of the father of Akhethotep, whose son (co-owner of D64) bears his grandfather's name and for this reason he is usually referred to as Ptahhotep II. The Tomb of the elder Ptahhotep was designated D62, with the entrance facing east.

Although the mastaba D64 is named outside as the "Tomb of Ptahhotep", this is incorrect and results from its early history, when only the chapel of Ptahhotep was open to the public.

The complex containing this mastaba is hardly visible from orbital cameras (see Google Earth view) due to everything being the same colour as the surrounding desert sand. The courtyard and the recessed entry to D64 are visible, also the approach ramp from the direction of the Djoser complex. The D64 complex also contains several other, smaller, mastabas which have not survived as well as those of D62 and D64.

This page provides the general details of both the family and the mastaba as a whole. The two following pages will describe separately the two areas of the mastaba, being those areas belong to Akhethotep and then that of Ptahhotep. Personal details of the individual owners will be contained likewise.

THE FAMILY

The family of these two tomb owners is dominated by their two names, those of Akhethotep and Ptahhotep. Several high officials named Ptahhotep were buried at Saqqara, at least three predate

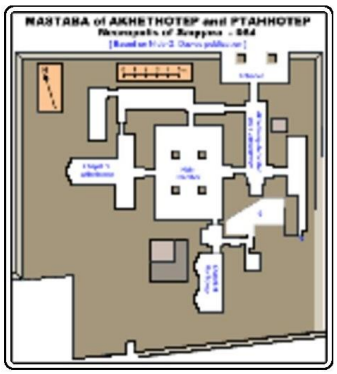
those of D64 and D62. Only those of these two mastabas can, with reasonable certainty, be shown to be related; the family therefore being as follows :

- Ptahhotep (D62) is the eldest, and usually referred to as Ptahhotep I.
- Akhethotep (D64) was the son of the above.
- Ptahhotep (D64) shares the mastaba with his father and is usually referred to as Phtahotep II.
- Akethotep and Ptahhotep, sons of Ptahhotep II, are mentioned as such in D64.

The burial place of the youngest Akhethotep was almost certainly the mastaba (E17) located to the south-east of the pyramid of Djoser, but north of the causeway of Unas. The whereabouts of the youngest Ptahhotep is unknown.

The father and son relationship between the two people of D64 was originally proposed by Norman de Garis Davies as Ptahhotep being the father. However, one year after publishing his first book on the mastaba, he reversed this in Part II of the publication, with supporting evidence.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MASTABA COMPLEX



In a general manner, the mastaba (an Arabian word meaning "bench") is often more remarkable due to the interesting content and beauty of the scenes (often in painted on sculpted bas-relief), than by its architecture, which is usually very simple. It is composed of a superstructure within which is primarily a funeral chapel (the decorated part of the monument), accessible to the living for the purpose of cult worship, and of an infrastructure including a well shaft giving access to the actual burial vault.

Mastaba D64 includes three decorated spaces: two in the name of vizier Akhethotep, the third in the name of his son Ptahhotep.

It is this last space, the chapel of Ptahhotep, with the amazing quality of its painted bas-reliefs, which easily sustain comparison with those of the mastaba of Ty, that the whole mastaba, in an incorrect manner, is called the "Tomb (or chapel) of Ptahhotep".



The mastaba employed three types of stonework in its construction : Conspicuous parts, such as the exterior walls and the upper part of all the interior walls (certainly those containing decoration), were constructed mainly with white Turah limestone. The rest, with the exception of the roofing slabs (which were of a poor quality yellow stone), used a courser stone of a purplish colour. The entrance to the mastaba lies towards the east end of the north facing frontage, It is narrow and set back in a recess, the south wall of which has a much slighter slope than that of the facade. At the time of Norman de Garis Davis, it was impossible to determine if this recess had been pillared and roofed as in some mastabas. At the north-west corner of the mastaba, the wall of the next mastaba (D62) shows that a lane of about 1.5 metres (at ground level) exists between the mastabas. This is currently blocked with brickwork.



A short narrow entrance leads to a long decorated room which appears to have served only as a corridor, oriented north-south, measuring approximately 7 metres long by 2 metres wide. The detail of the walls were never fully completed, and all stages of production are found, from almost obliterated ink designs to exquisitely finished reliefs. It was decorated for Akhethotep, Ptahhotep appearing and named as his son. Part of the decoration (east wall) contains a parade of 17 women, each acting as a symbol for one of the estates of Akhethotep. Other representations essentially reflect agricultural and pastoral activities.

Facing the entrance, the southern end is terminated by a relatively deep niche. Its base is raised about one metre above the floor of the corridor, and it was possibly intended for a seated statue

of the deceased.
This entry corridor has three exits, one on the eastern side, two on the west. Before the niche, the passage to the east leads to a very damaged annexe and possibly further constructs. The northern-most west exit gives access, by a passage, to two further subsidiary undecorated rooms. The first has its long axis east to west whilst the other is north to south. The passage from the south end of this decorated entry corridor leads to a large, undecorated, four pillared hall.

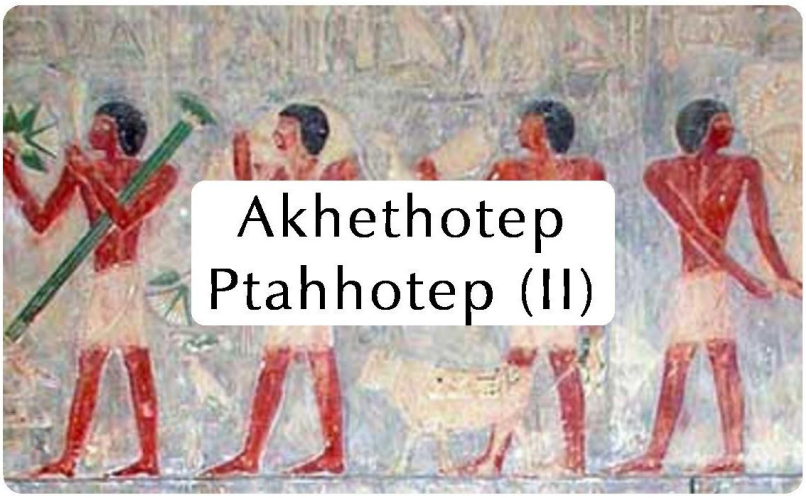
The hall is the main strategic core of the funerary complex, and measures approximately 6.3m across (east to west) and 8.4m in length (north-south). The heavy stone roofing was carried on rough hewn architraves, over 3 metres in length, which crossed the room in three spans by aid of the four pillars. The pillars are oblong in section. The hall was built with white stone, except for the framing of the south and west doorways, but the surface of the walls and pillars remained rough, so that its uninscribed state seems intentional.
A doorway at the centre of the north wall of the hall again also leads to the two northern rooms accessed from entrance corridor.
On the western wall of the hall, facing the main entry from the corridor, is the passageway leading to the fully decorated chapel of Akhethotep. This is in the form of a rotated "T", the cross member of which possibly served as an antechamber. Facing the entrance from the corridor, at the western end of the stem of the "T", is the false door of Akhethotep, at the foot of which is an alter-stone. From the previously mentioned northern rooms it was possible to enter into the northern annexe of the "antechamber" of this chapel.



Finally, a doorway at the south east corner of the pillared hall leads, via a small chamber, into the decorated chapel of Ptahhotep. This small collection of rooms is at a lower level than the hall itself and is basically oriented north to south.

The main well shaft to the burial chamber lies to the west of the chapel of Ptahhetep, which it is claimed, originally contained a stone sarcophagus in the burial vault. A much smaller shaft was discovered to the east of the entry corridor, of which the chamber below it was found to be full with the debris of pillaged burials of a later date, and may possibly be itself a later construction. It was reported to Davis that there may be a well shaft behind the stela of Akhethotep, where indeed one would be expected, but he did not find one at the time of his excavations.

The three decorated areas will be discussed in more detail in the appropriate following pages.



Mastaba D64 : the decorated areas belonging to Akhethotep

AKHETHOTEP

Akhethotep appears to have belonged to a family of high officials of the Vth dynasty, beginning (at least) with his father Ptahhotep, whose mastaba (D62) is located next to that of his own. His son, also Ptahhotep, shares in a small way this mastaba. From the inscriptions it can be observed that Akhethotep held the titles :
- Supreme judge and vizier
- Superintendent of the great court
- First after the king
- Staff of the people
- Priest of Ma'at
- High priest of the beautiful pyramid of Djed-Ka-ra
- Superintendent of the two granaries

Superintendent of the scribes of the royal accounts
and many more…
There are actually 25 titles listed in the two locations dedicated to Akhethotep.
Some of his titles were honorific but some were actual practical functions.

He had under his control a great many estates, distributed widely in both Upper and Lower Egypt. The list on the east wall of the corridor differs slightly, in both order and content, from those on the east wall of the chapel. This could be attributed to them being re-named.

THE DECORATION IN GENERAL

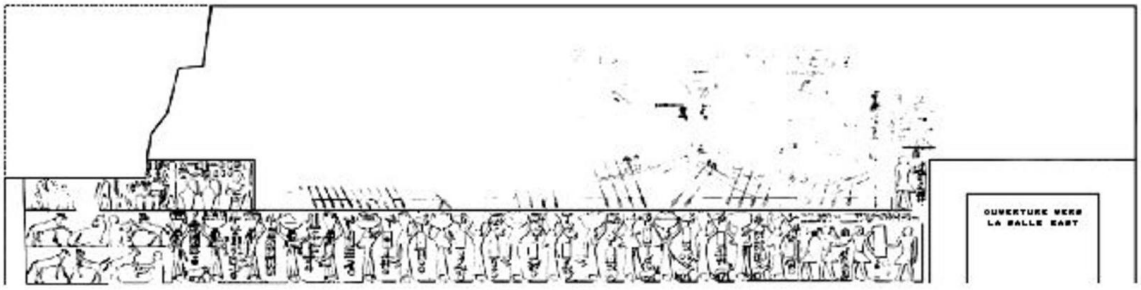
Although the portion of the mastaba attributable to Akhethotep is considerable (being everything, apart from the small area at the rear belonging to Ptahhotep), only the entrance corridor and the "T"-shaped chapel were actually decorated. The other rooms and corridors have already been described on the previous page.
The decorated portion of the wall of the entrance corridor covered approximately the top 50 percent of the wall height and the chapel covered to top 60-70 percent, the two annexes being slightly lower in height than the main part of the chamber. The lower area of the walls, being constructed in the poorer purplish stone, remained practically blank. There are minor exceptions to this, especially at the surrounds to doorways and the fact that the bottom delimiting red and yellow borders also extended on to this stone work, for example: the entrance to the northern

chamber from the north annexe of the chapel (see 05).

THE ENTRANCE CORRIDOR

The first room, after entering the mastaba through a narrow passage, is approximately 7 metres long by 2 metres wide, with a height of about 3.5 metres. It is only decorated on the two long (east and west) sides.
The east side, left on entry, is missing part of the upper area and what remains of this is almost indiscernible, but the outlines and some of the details of the boats and their occupants can still be recognised. However, the lowest register survives intact. Broad red and yellow bands edged in black, underline the decorative area and encroach on to the courser stone used at the bottom of the wall (see 01).
The sculpture and decoration of either wall, as already stated, was never completed, existing in every stage of completion.
The corridor has three exits, one on the eastern side, two on the west. All three doorways are narrow, well under a metre wide, but they are about 2 metres in height. Details of the rooms or passages beyond have already been described, on the previous page.

EAST WALL



Offerings chapel, east wall (click on an area for enlargement)
(based on "Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhethetep at Saqqareh - Part II", *EEF, London, 1901, by N de G Davies)*

Although in a varied state of completion, the scenes which are still visible on the east wall (left-hand side on entry) are those commonly found on corridor walls. The main (upper) space was occupied by three ships, all progressing to the right. They are manned by eight or twelve rowers each. Because of the state of preservation, masts can now only be seen on the two right-hand boats. At the time of Davies' survey, the figure of Akhethotep could just be seen in the leading vessel. Any inscriptions which may have existed are now too damaged for translation.
Still remaining above the doorway to the eastern chamber is the end of a row of servants, who may have been approaching a seated figure of Akhethotep. At the side of the doorway is *"the servant of the ka and keeper of the wardrobe, Kaemthenent."*. This one figure is the only fully sculptured one on this wall; all the upper scenes have been left uncut, and remain merely as drawings, the figures in black, the ships in red and yellow inks. For the most part they are now almost erased.



Below the ships is a long procession of seventeen female figures, headed by a leader, a scribe and a servant. The former presents a tablet of accounts to Akhethotep's son, Ptahhotep (who shares this mastaba with his father, see his chapel). The women carry produce in baskets on their heads, and bring birds and animals as the tribute of the estates. The scene is titled : *"Review of the presentation by the superintendent of the estate attached to the 'Beautiful' pyramid of King Isesi, First after the King, Ptahhotep."*. Because the son receives this tribute it can be inferred that it is presented after the death of Akhethotep.

The sign of an enclosure which follows (below) the name written in front of each woman makes it clear that she represents one of the many estates belonging to Akhethotep. These list are not uncommon, but here we have the added value from the mention of the district in which each estate was situated. It should be noted that this mastaba is particularly valuable by providing no less than three such lists of property.
The figures in the lower register are merely cut out roughly round the drawn outlines; the inside lines, where they still exist, are only in ink.

To the left of the women and on a short register above, is a small varied collection of scenes. At the bottom there is the familiar group (on two sub-registers) in which calves are either tethered or are held fast by young herdsmen. In the upper register, men are emptying wine into large open-mouthed jars, probably for eventual storage in the two long-necked vessels which stand close by. The scene is titled : *"Storing the wine which is for per-kheru offerings."*. The *per-kheru offerings* are those which are requested by the deceased.
The latter half of these two scenes has only been executed in ink.

WEST WALL



Entrance corridor west wall (click on an area for enlargement)
(based on "Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhethetep at Saqqareh - Part II", *EEF, London, 1901, by N de G Davies)*



Like the east wall, the west wall is also unfinished, although in much better state of preservation. It is occupied by two scenes, each contained in five registers and witnessed by Akhethotep and his son. Over the head of the rightmost occurrence of Akhethotep are six columns of titles. The ink traces of a seventh column seem to show that there were other titles, of which it was afterwards decided not to include. Above the associated image of Ptahhotep, the text begins : *"His eldest son, beloved by him, his trusty one……"*.
The movement is, in general, from the door inwards towards the presence of the deceased.

West wall, north :

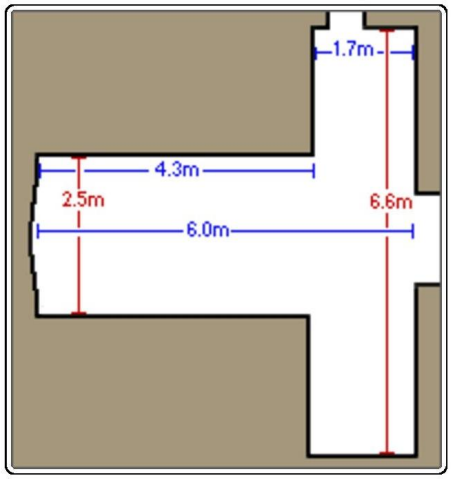
This, the right-hand section of the wall, has a group of scenes titled : *"Viewing the works of the field, that which is brought by the fishermen of the estates belonging to the tomb."*
Of the two upper registers only enough of the design remains as to show that the second register began like those below and there would probably have been a fishing scene at the right-hand end. In the three remaining rows servants advance carrying birds and bunches of papyrus and lotus blossoms, the produce of the marsh-lands. The fowling scene above the doorway is a reminder of the labour by which the gifts were produced. The first two characters and their hieroglyphs of the lowest register have been fully sculpted while those following are only sculpted in outline (see 03). On the register above, even though the first three characters have been fully sculpted, a single hieroglyph (drawn in black ink) has remained un-cut; compare it with one in a finished state in front of the following character (see 04).

West wall, south :

The subject of the southern half of the wall is that of the harvest field. It is described as : *"Viewing the works of the field, the reaping and carrying, a sight fair beyond all things."*.
The execution of the work is curiously uneven. The two upper registers are sculptured in a somewhat coarse and careless manner; the third and the fifth remain at their first stage as mere designs. These latter are now so soiled and faint that they are, in places, difficult to read. Nevertheless, the draughtsman, who so easily traced these temporary outlines for the guidance of the sculptor, had unwittingly created a most secure monument to his skill. Where the stone was undamaged Davies found "that with a little careful cleaning the bold outlines, which they had received ages ago, appeared as if by magic; for Egyptian ink was almost a mordant, and nothing but the roughest usage can affect it".
Above the entrance doorway to the pillared hall is a single register containing five porters bearing items of furniture towards the rear of Akhethotep. There is no visible sign of any other register above it.

AKHETHOTEP'S CHAPEL

The chapel can be entered from the entrance corridor, either directly by crossing the centre of the great pillared hall, or via the northern passage and chambers. The chapel is a rotated "T" shape, the entry from the pillared hall being in the middle of the east wall, which forms the cross member of the "T".



The chapel dimensions are shown opposite. The height of the main part of the chamber is approximately 4 metres, the ceiling of the two annexes being about 0.3 metres lower. The decorated portion of the walls cover approximately the top 60-70 percent.

The arrangement of the scenes has a considerable resemblance to that in Ptahhotep's chapel, despite the difference in shape, the north and south walls (forming the stem of the "T") together with the west wall, equating to the west wall of the chapel of Ptahhotep.
The east wall is devoted to outdoor scenes of fishing and farming, although the bottom register displays the female figures representing the estates of Akhethotep, first found in the entry corridor.
The west wall consists solely of a false-door stela.
At first glance the content of the northern and southern halves of the chamber appear to be mirror images; but as described below, this is not the case. For example, the walls of the north and south annexes differ in that they contain, on their west walls, the presentation of wild animals and oxen respectively.

As with the corridor, broad red and yellow bands edged in black, underline the decorative area and encroach on to the courser stone used at the bottom of the wall.

EAST WALL



Offerings chapel, east wall (click on an area for enlargement)
(based on "Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhethetep at Saqqareh - Part II", *EEF, London, 1901, by N de G Davies)*

This extends into both the northern and southern annexe areas, forming their east walls.

The arrangement of the subjects on this long wall is very artistically managed. The top of the doorway is positioned amongst a papyrus thicket, which thematically blends with the scenes on either side. These form two symmetrical designs representing the life and products of the marsh lands. No matter how overused this picture of the bird-abundant thicket may be, it never fails to be attractive. Unfortunately the scene has nearly vanished through weathering. Below, on either side of the doorway, two fishermen ply their craft in small boats, the one on the right using a dip-net, the other using a line with bait.

East wall, south :

The scenes of the right-hand side of this wall are divided into four registers, and are described as : *"Viewing all the works of the fields in the marsh lands, whatever is good."*. The seated Akhethotep watches over the scenes from the southern end of the wall, clothed in a loose tunic and wearing a long wig.
In the topmost register the men carry large bundles of papyrus. In the two registers below can be seen the returning boats laden with waterfowl and lotus flowers. The lowest of the four registers (i.e. in the foreground) are the cattle returning from the marshes, a calf is carried through the water on the back of a herdsman while the cattle follow him.

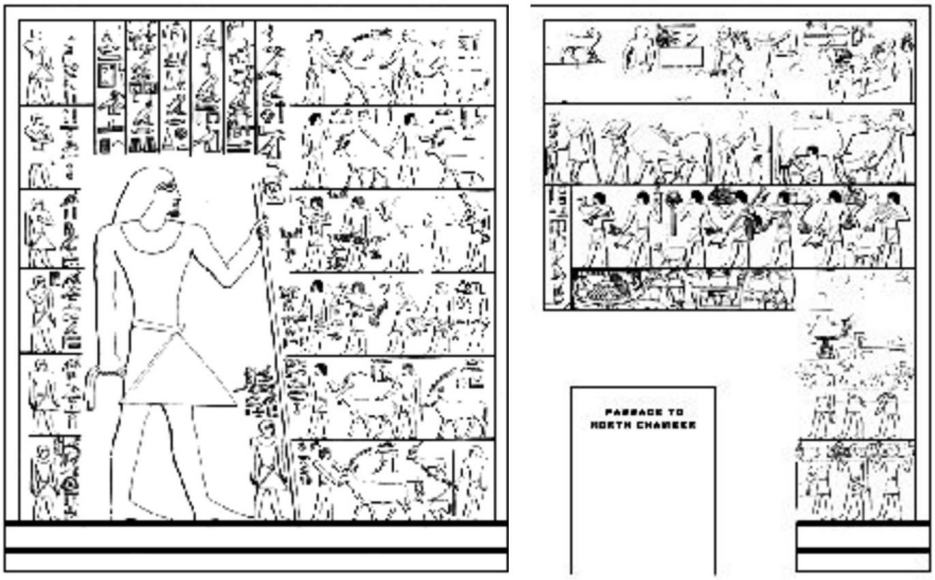
Below these scenes is a procession of female figures, representing the southern estates, received by Ptahhotep. The text reads : *"The counting of the contributions of the estates belonging to the tomb, which the south brings for per-kheru offerings, by his beloved elder son, the sab-ad-mer* (meaning: inspector of canals) *, Ptahhotep."*.

East wall, north :

At the bottom of this side of the wall, a similar scene and inscription represents the contributions from the north, again received by Ptahhotep. Together they comprise the seventeen family estates.

Like the south part of the wall, the area above is devoted to similar subjects, which depict the labour in the uncultivated lands of the northern estates. The descriptive text states : *"Viewing the works of the fields, everything that is good, done in the marshes."*
In the topmost register are cattle. A labourer assists at the birth of a calf. Below is shown the familiar process of making small papyrus boats by binding the reeds tightly together. Above the men are coils of rope, and the words *"Building a boat in the marshes."*.
Underneath, men carry bundles of papyrus and marsh fowl, titled : *"Bringing all kinds of good things made in the papyrus marshes by the papyrus gatherers, and all kinds of fowl."*.
Similarly in the scene below, *"Going forth from the marsh land, and bringing the work of the fields from the papyrus marshes…*.

NORTH ANNEXE



West wall North wall

Offerings chapel, North annexe (click on an area for enlargement)
(based on "Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhethetep at Saqqareh - Part II", *EEF*, London, 1901, by N de G Davies)



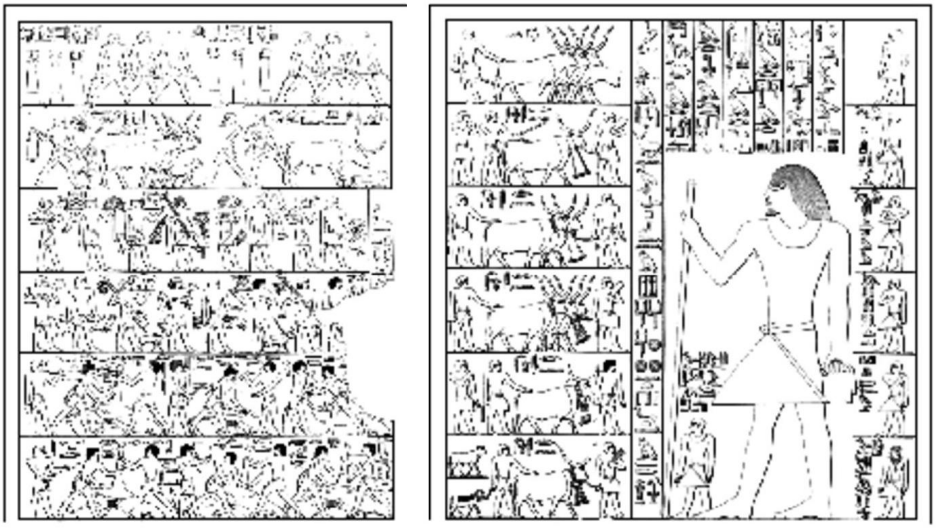
North wall :

The two upper registers contain outdoor scenes. At the top, a herdsman watches over tethered animals, and a comrade puts captured birds into a cage. At the right another man sits in a herdsman's shelter, enjoying the plentiful food piled before him.
Below, on the left, a cow suckles her calf while an old man (perhaps an overseer), leaning on a staff and accompanied by a child, converses with the herdsman. The scene on the right is of a cow being milked. This is also attended by an old man, this time he bends over a stoppered jar.
Above and to the right of the doorway are pictured the gifts of food for the deceased, either piled up on tables or in the hands of approaching servants. The text states : *"Bringing forward the per-kheru offerings as daily dues of every day."*.
The remaining scenes, on the right of the doorway, remain at the drawing stage, which had been executed in red, blue, and green inks. The red ledger lines, which gave the proportions of the figures, are well preserved.
The doorway is framed in red paint all the way to the floor. Broad red and yellow stripes, which encroach on to the course stones at the bottom of the wall, mark the bottom of the display area.

West wall :

The subject of the west wall is well described by the inscription : *"Seeing the presentation of animals of the desert."*.
The standing figure of Akhethotep and *"his beloved son, Ptahhotep"* are followed by five officials and a second figure of his son. The officials consist of a steward, a chief physician who is named Unnefer, and three scribes.
Being brought towards Akhethotep, for his approval, are : in the two upper registers an oryx, a bubale, a gazelle, and an ibex; in the two lower registers a male ibex and an addax, and another oryx, gazelle and bubale. These are sometimes grouped in short lists of offerings as antelopes. In the middle registers, men present birds and flowers. The sculptor has left the last figure in both of the middle registers uncut.

SOUTH ANNEXE



mur sud mur ouest

Offerings chapel, South annexe (click on an area for enlargement)
(based on "Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhethetep at Saqqareh - Part II", *EEF*, London, 1901, by N de G Davies)

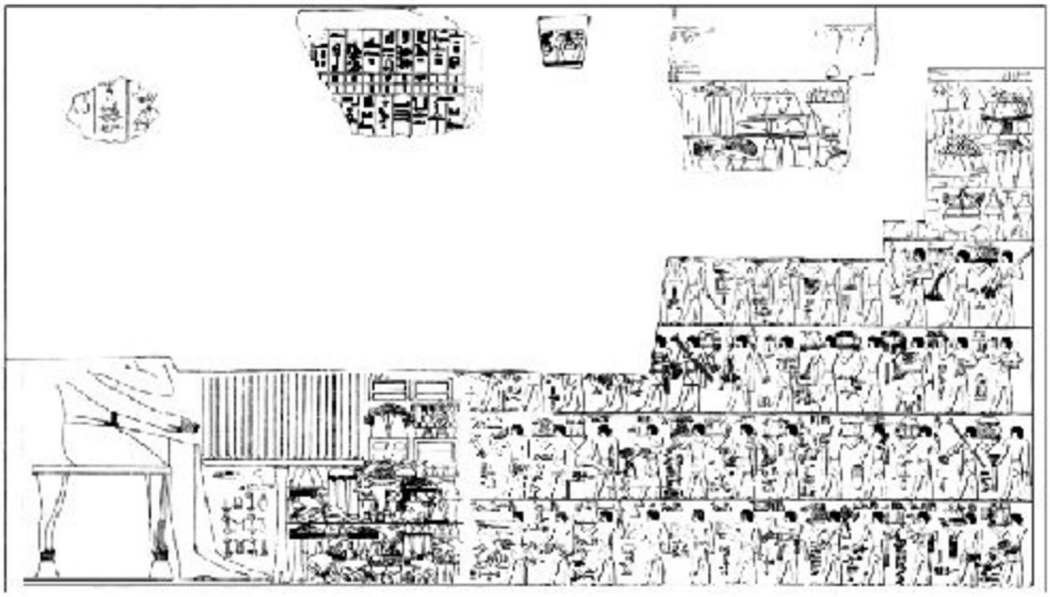
South wall :

The uppermost register contains a scene in which shrines, shaped like narrow pylons and crowned with four feathers, are dragged three at a time by as many men. The text reads : *"Bringing up the sledges by the servants of the ka.".*
In the two middle rows varied gifts are brought by servants, the title being : *"Bringing forward the provisions belonging to the daily service.".*
The second register is obviously the beginning of the fifth and sixth. Oxen are being caught and bound for slaughter. The scenes in which the slaughtered animals are cut up for consumption are repeated in almost every tomb. Here the accompanying texts are the conversations between the men : *"Pull !" "Pull properly !" "Do it well, comrade !" "Take good hold, comrade!"* with the responses *"I am doing as you say."* and the like.

West wall :

The design and decoration of this wall is the counterpart of the west wall of the north annexe, oxen being substituted for the various animals of the desert. Other officials are represented, three of whom are seated scribes of high rank. The whole is described as : *"Viewing the cattle of the Thoth festival, brought from the properties of the ka and the estates belonging to the tomb, in the north and south of the country.".*
The long-horned cattle, with elaborate green collars, are driven in six groups by their herdsmen, who carry wisps of green grass. The animals in the top register are unadorned. The lower part of the wall has retained most of its colouring, so that the smaller figure of Ptahhotep and his titles could be almost completely restored to the original painted brilliancy. In this figure, the waves or curls of the hair or wig are in different form to normal, the style usually being either horizontal or vertical, (see line drawing).

NORTH WALL



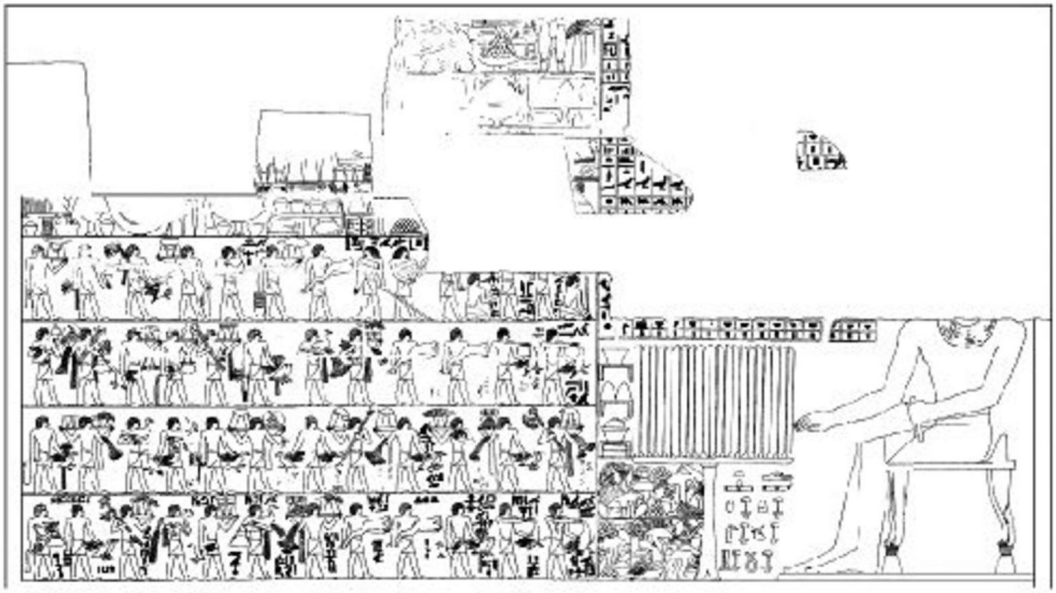
Offerings chapel, north wall (click image to enlarge)
(based on "Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhethetep at Saqqareh - Part II",
EEF, London, 1901, by N de G Davies)



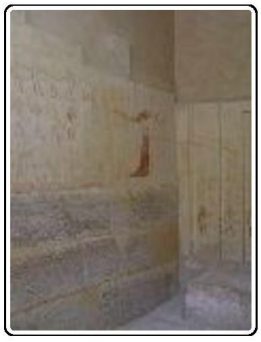
In the extension of the room which forms the upright of the "T ", all the sculpture is concerned with the maintenance and well-being of the ka.
At the far west end of both the north and south walls the deceased is seated before a table of offerings.
The upper registers have suffered most from the ravages of time. The lost portion mainly contained the list of Akhethotep's titles (originally situated above his head), the list of offerings and finally four registers of food and gifts. Some major portions of the incomplete upper registers were located for both walls during the early excavations.
The list of offerings, over the table in front of Akhethotep, consisted of five rows of sixteen columns, thus containing eighty items, as against ninety-six in Ptahhotep's chapel. Beneath the table, in a form which varies only slightly from tomb to tomb, is a pile of massed offerings, and the words : *"Funerary offerings : thousands* (meaning many) *of bread, beer, oxen, geese, yarn and cloth."*. These are being brought by some fifty officials and unnamed servitors. Ptahhotep (at the front of the bottom register) and the many lector priests appointed to perform with him the necessary rites, are celebrating them at the head of the procession. Behind them follow the well-laden friends and servants (see 10). At the top, the registers with varied offerings complete the decoration of the wall.

All the work is beautifully finished and is in excellent preservation, considering the damage to the chamber and original loss of a roof. A little colour remains here and there; the offerings beneath the table have retained the most.

SOUTH WALL

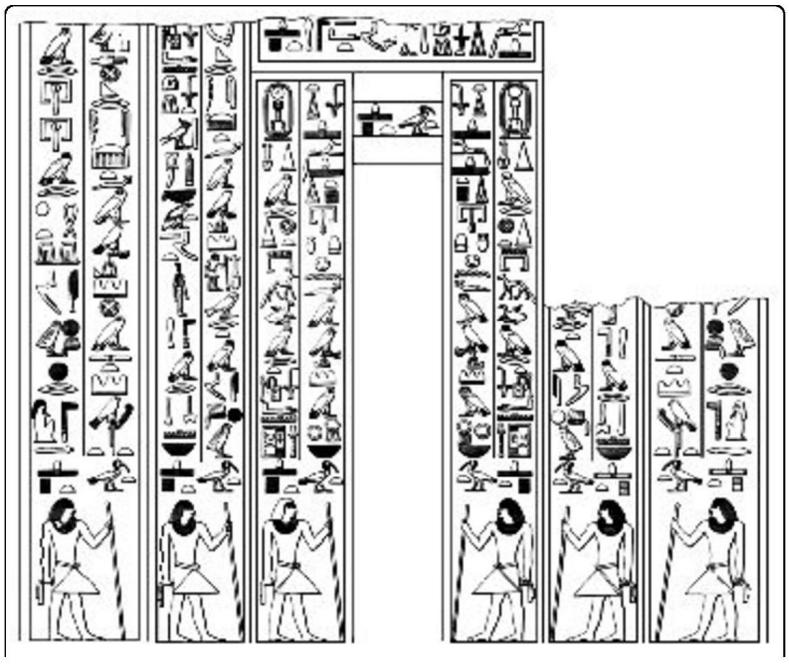


Offerings chapel, south wall (click image to enlarge)
(based on "Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhethetep at Saqqareh - Part II",
EEF, London, 1901, by N de G Davies)



The south wall is similar in decoration and about as equally destroyed as the north wall. Slightly different areas of the upper east end of the wall has survived. Also the lower portion of the list of offerings, which allowed its overall size (on both walls) to be assessed.
Akhethotep again sits at the west end of the wall, in front of his table of offerings, but nothing remains of his list of titles.
The total content of this wall mirrors that of the wall opposite, including the list of "thousands" under the table and Ptahhotep leading the procession of gift bearers.
On this wall the top two registers of offering bearers is almost complete, and at the right-hand end of the top row two can actually be seen kneeling, whilst all the others remain standing; another even turns to face the one following him.

WEST WALL AND FALSE DOOR



Offerings chapel, west wall (click image to enlarge)
(based on "Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhethetep at Saqqareh - Part II",
EEF, London, 1901, by N de G Davies)



From the point of view of the ka, the false door which forms the west wall of the chamber was the entrance to this, the reception room of his eternal house. Originally, this must have been a magnificent monument, and a great deal of impious energy must have been expended on its mutilation, just to use it as a ready source of building material. The form of the false door is : a central inset section, originally painted to resemble planks of wood, with three door jambs on either side. On each side, these are set back from each other, the outermost being almost as deeply set as the central door. The outer jambs are edged by vertical half-rounded narrow columns.
At the base of the false door is a simple low offering table, for the placement of cult offerings, cut from the same stone used for the lower part of the wall.

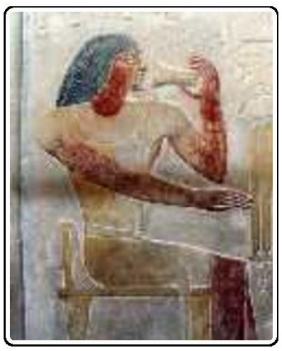
The inscription on the jambs end with the name and a standing figure of the deceased and are identical on both sides. The inscriptions are of the usual formula :
"May the king and Anubis grant an invocation offerings of bread and beer to him in the necropolis as daily rations every day."
" (May Anubis, lord of the) sacred land grant his burial in the necropolis, and a very happy old age as to one who is deserving."
" (May Osiris, lord of) Busiris grant his burial in the necropolis city in the western desert."
Akhethotep is described here as *"deserving before the great god (Osiris)."*

The colours of the stela false door, which were without doubt numerous and often vivid, have deteriorated with exposure.



Mastaba D64 : the decorated areas belonging to Ptahhotep

PTAHHOTEP



Ptahhotep - "Ptah is satisfied" - is an anthroponym formed from the name of the god Ptah, head of the Memphite region and its necropolis. This name was carried by several high officials of the Vth Dynasty, who mostly reached the position of vizier, making of them the most important characters in Egypt, after the king. Ptahhotep shares with his father Akhethotep, who was also a vizier, - a double mastaba, of which he occupies only a modest part. Was he himself a vizier ? Even though the title doesn't appear positively in his chapel, it nevertheless appears on his sarcophagus.

In his chapel, Ptahhotep is represented in the company of his two "eldest" sons, of which one carries the name of his father Ptahhotep and the other that of his grandfather Akhethotep. Both held important functions during the reign of Unas, successor of Djedkare-Isesi, and last king of the Vth Dynasty.

Just like his predecessors, Ptahhotep carried many titles, of which some cover actual functions, while others are purely honorary.

Ptahhotep was notably "inspector of the priests of the pyramid of Isesi, of the wab-priests of the pyramid of Niuserre (and) of the priests of the pyramid of Menkauhor".

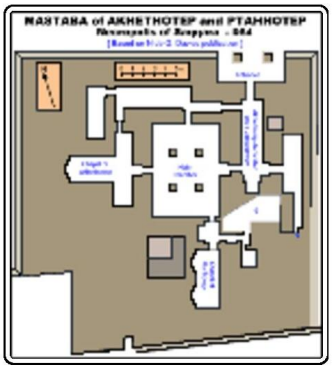
Among other titles, Ptahhotep especially takes advantage of the title of "priest of Ma'at" or the epithet "who likes Ma'at", denominations indicating a major function comparable to the one of a real minister of the justice. He held more functions in direct relation to royal power. His important functions and moreover his marked affinity to Ma'at - an expression of the first order and of Justice - sometimes were worth him to be identified as the author of the famous Maxims of Ptahhotep, of which we are far from being certain.

Of the other titles held by Ptahhotep, he shared "inspector of canals" with his two eldest sons; while others included :

- First after the King
- Staff of the people
- Governor of the Great House
- Director of the Great Court
- Chief of the secrets of all commands of the King

and many more...

PTAHHOTEP'S ANTECHAMBER AND CHAPEL



The portion of the whole mastaba attributable to Phathotep is entered by passing through a narrow doorway in the south-east corner of the pillared hall.

The floor level of the first small room, effectively the antechamber, is lower than that of the previous hall by about 0.3m, its roof being no higher than the 2m high entrance, giving the room a height of about 2.33m. On the right hand side is a shelved recess. In the bottom corner of this was found a shell containing red paint. It is possible that it may have been left in that dark place by one of the artists who painted the snails of the chapel within, perhaps the master Ptahenankh himself.

The construction of the mastaba to the east of this antechamber is not fully known. A stairway had been constructed after discovery by Mariette in order that the aristocracy of Egypt could enter Ptahhotep's chamber. This was possibly at the cost of some destruction. It is only by the removal of this and a critical examination of the foundations here that the original plan may in time be recovered.
However, close to the door of the chapel a narrow passage leads to the left into a room built in white limestone and even smaller than the antechamber. This leads to at least two more rooms, which, at the time of Davies, were still filled with fallen bricks and stones.

A doorway at the south end of the antechamber leads to the chapel of Ptahhotep. This doorway, only a metre wide and 2.2m high, is decorated on both sides. Again the floor level is lowered, now being 0.7m lower than that of the pillared hall. This time the ceiling level is raised considerably. It is the chapel of Ptahhotep which will be the main topic of this page. It appears to be very modest by its measurements, 5.3m north-south and 2.3m east-west, with a height of 3.75m (2.75m of which is sculptured, the false doors are of course almost full height, reaching to about 0.5m from the floor). On the other hand, it is absolutely remarkable by the quality of its painted bas-reliefs, which comfortably sustain comparison with those of the mastaba of Ty. It is partly for this reason that the whole of the mastaba, in an incorrect manner, is called the "Tomb (or chapel) of Ptahhotep".
The ceiling is constructed from two immense roofing stones, the visible side of which has been grooved and painted a warm red, to represent the trunks of palm trees which are laid transversely across the chamber (see 2). The decorated areas of the walls were faced with white limestone before being sculpted and painted. The lower portion, below the decoration, is of a courser purplish stone.

THE WALL DECORATION IN GENERAL





It is almost certain that when Mariette discovered the chapel of Ptahhotep, in the middle of the 19th century, the bas-reliefs would still have retained a good portion and freshness of their colours. But the administrative negligence often coupled with a lack of respect for the elementary techniques of conservation during about fifty years, altered the colourful beauty of a great number of the representations.
Because of its lack of size, the chapel of Ptahhotep doesn't offer anywhere near the decorative surface comparable to those which are offered by the great mastabas of the beginning of the 5th Dynasty. But this restricted surface presents a certain advantage: it concentrates in very little space, the major representations, avoiding certain "repetitions" specific to larger tombs.

Independently of the representations common to all mastabas, bound to the preparation and the indispensable offering contribution for the deceased's survival (here the south and west walls), the chapel of Ptahhotep, is rich with original scenes, combining the precision of attentive observation with that of the remarkable smoothness of execution.
All representations from the chapel are intimately bound together: from the functional efficiency of the hunting scenes in the desert (for example, views 07 and 08) or of the most remarkable representations of breeding (for example, views 09, 10) found on the east wall; to the representation of the supply of table offerings for Ptahhotep (for example, views 13, 14 and 15) of the west wall. Inversely, of the effectiveness of the deceased's funerary food, mentioned on the west wall, the place of nocturnal regeneration (solar rebirth) depends upon the pursuit of his daily activities representing on the east wall. The decor of the chapel achieves, thanks to the interaction between different permanent scenes of the "daily" terrestrial life of Ptahhotep, in assuring his funerary future, the funeral representations validating for eternity the action led by the deceased when he was alive.

ENTRANCE DOORWAY



East and West Entrance Walls
(based on "Tomb of Ptah-Hetep", *ERA, London, 1896, by Paget and Pirie)*

On the two inside thickness walls of the entrance, in four symmetrical registers, appears the transportation of the offerings. The "servants of the ka" bring the necessary elements for provision of the table of offerings, represented on the west wall of the chamber. The majority of the products result from breeding - cattle and birds.

On the east (left) wall, the top register contains oxen. On the three registers below there are miscellaneous offerings brought by "*ka*-servants" (see 03).

The west (right) wall contains similar content on the lower three registers, but probably the most interesting element, appears in the upper register. In this can be found the most representative inhabitants of the farmyard, of which every species is indicated by name. Appearing successively from top to bottom and from left to right, whose names are found in the hieroglyphic writing: some geese with white foreheads (*tjerep*), some ducks (*pekhet*), some pigeons (*menut*), some common grey geese (*ra*), some pintail ducks (*set*) and some other geese (*ser*).

NORTH WALL

Upper part of the north wall

The different representations decorating the upper part of the north wall in its eastern section illustrate the early activities of Ptahhotep: decorated with toiletry and musical episodes, and the attentive listening to the principle official reports submitted to his authority.

Enthroned on his splendid seat, Ptahhotep receives official reports from an official at the front of the third register, while around him servants fuss with his outward appearance: one adjusts his wig and beard, another brings linen and a third, a pedicure expert, smears his feet with a fragrant ointment. From behind



North Wall - upper section
(based on "Tomb of Ptah-Hetep", *ERA, London, 1896, by Paget and Pirie)*

him, another brings him a box with legs. Below him a pet handler retains three sloughi and a monkey (which still retains some of its blue colour) on leashes (see 17).

On the top register is a harpist accompanied by another person clapping time, or clicking his fingers. Behind them four dwarfs check their master's jewelled collars and ornaments for his adornment.
The two middle registers each present a succession of six civil servants knelt in attitudes of respectful submissiveness.
On the lowest register are three more musicians - a harpist, a chantress and a flutist (see 18). In front of them a favoured person helps himself from an large pile of provisions; he is the chief stone-mason, Sethef, probably the builder of the tomb.

Lower part of the north wall



North Wall - lower section
(based on "Tomb of Ptah-Hetep", *ERA, London, 1896, by Paget and Pirie)*

Situated to the left of the doorway when viewing it, and distributed on four registers, the scenes again illustrate the contribution of the offerings and the ritual carving of the livestock into pieces (see 39).

The top register contains *"Bringing things to the superintendent of the pyramid city… Ptahhotep."*.

The second register: *"Bringing tribute, sprouting things and all good things by the ka-servants, …"*.

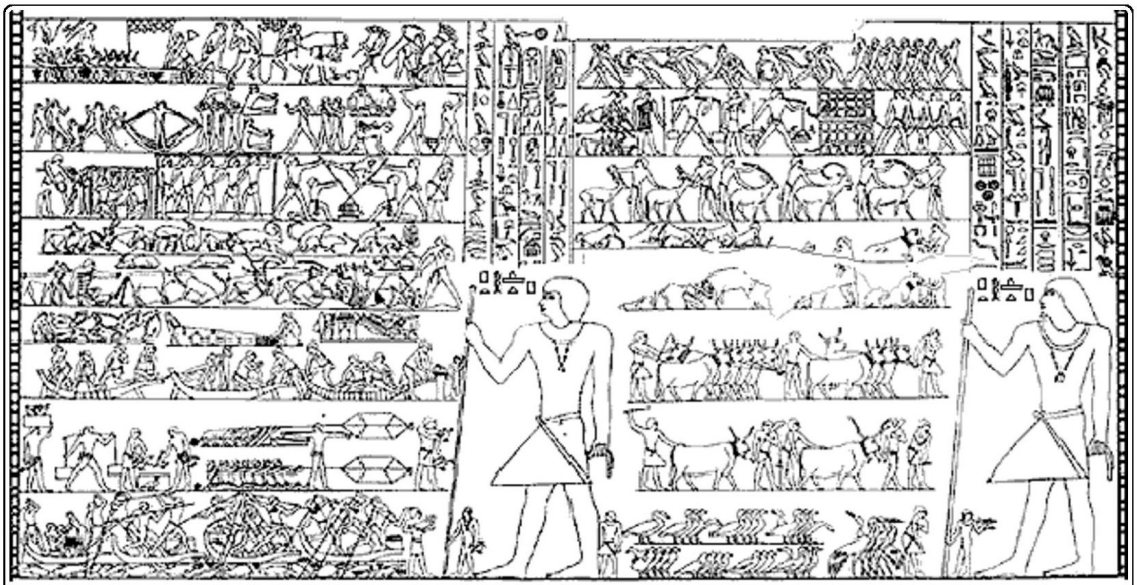
The third and fourth register contains the cutting up of livestock. These two registers contain the conversations, between the characters, in the hieroglyphic text above them.

On the third register, the fifth man, who holds the leg of the second ox, extends his hand to the "chief *wab*-priest of Pharaoh, the physician Akhatarna, saying, *"See this blood!"*. The priest replies, *"This is pure."*.

On the fourth register, the two men on the left speedily cut the foreleg of an ox, whereas their companion exclaims proudly: *"see this heart !"*. On the right, a final participant advances, carrying a large container. He orders the butchers, who busy themselves: *"Give me this blood !"*.

EAST WALL

Developing a rich theme, the eastern wall divides into two great scenes: on the left (= north half) there appears a full size figure of Ptahhotep, accompanied by his "eldest son" Ptahhotep (II). He takes pleasure to gaze upon *"the pleasing activities accomplished by the whole country."*. On the right (= south half), Ptahhotep (older than on the left), always represented full size, but this time accompanied by his "eldest son" Akhethotep, contemplate *"the contributions from the fortresses and the cities from the South and North of the funerary domain…"*.



East Wall (click on an area for enlargement)
(based on "Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhethetep at Saqqareh", *EEF, London, 1900, by N de G Davies)*

The decor presents a very great variety of themes, also evoking the natural setting in its different biotopes which the various activities of a population of peasant-fishermen, underlining all the importance of breeding which constituted the main wealth of senior officials in charge of the administration of the great domains.

The left part (north half)

The group of scenes are distributed in 7 main registers, of which two (registers 4 and 5) are subdivided into half registers.
Ptahhotep is represented full size. He wears a large necklace decorated with four rows of pearls and a pendant in the shape of a heart. Coiffured with a short wig, he is clothed with a triangular loincloth and holds the long staff, insignia of his high office.
Above Ptahhotep, the legend states that he is *"seeing every pleasant amusement which is performed in the whole land"*. The inscription concludes with a list of his titles.
He is preceded by *"his eldest son, whom he loves; the sab-ad-mer* (meaning: inspector of canals) *, Ptahhotep*". The son is pictured at smaller scale, holding a hoopoe bird in one hand by the wings and holding the bottom of the staff which his father carries : a picturesque way to underline the hereditary transmission of the his father's office.
Another canal inspector also accompanies Ptahhotep, but at his rear, this is Seshem-ka.

First Register : The upper register is damaged in its left part. Nevertheless, still recognisable there is the traditional passage of the herd crossing water. The continuation of the representation is dedicated to the gathering of papyrus, its processing and its transportation in bundles. The making of those materials used for the construction of (small) boats, an activity represented in the fifth register.

Second Register : This register is dedicated entirely to games and to physical exercises carried out by individual teenagers, detailing the technical aspect of their physical prowess. The second register appears as a symbolic manifestation of the very strong vitality which youth expresses, which thus translates into a promise of vital renewal for Ptahhotep, who contemplates these scenes. However, it may not be necessary to assign to these representations an essentially symbolic character, because these games of dexterity and balance were frequently practised.

span class="listepucenoire"›Third Register : The grapevine appears to be attached to a long piece of wood. The scene develops from right to left, illustrating the care brought to the vine until the treading of the grape. At far left, a "servant of the ka" waters a stock plant which develops into a

vine, from which a boy and two adults carefully harvest the heavy clusters. The legend clearly indicates *"to pick the grape"*. After the treading comes the pressing of the grape, an operation carried out by 5 men. One of the characters, in full extension, seems to do the splits in suspension over his companions: It is the ingenious way imagined by the artist to suggest a large spatial deployment in a scene treated in two dimensions.

Fourth Register : Distributed in half registers, the scenes take place in the desert zone characterised by vegetation made up of a few rare bushes and dunes. The sharp sense of observation and the exceptional mastery of the animal artist, continue in a vivid manner in this succession of small compact images from life. In these, the principal representatives of the fauna appear, which the Egyptian drove out using the swift sloughi or sometimes even attempted to domesticate, as in the following example with certain antelopes.
Below, and as always, from left to right, a hunter - the servant of the ka, Iry -, draped in a garment which will protect him against the cold night, holds on leashes two sloughi, while observing a cow followed by its calf: the poor wretch has just been seized in the mouth by a dangerous lion (see 07). A little further on, a gazelle and an oryx have been caught and then killed by the swift sloughi (see 08).
A very nice piece of artistic detail is shown towards the right-hand edge of the register, just below the line separating the two sub-registers. This shows two hedgehogs, the leftmost of which has a grasshopper in its mouth (see 26). But also notice how the scale of these is totally out of proportion to the beasts below.

Fifth Register : Various activities now take place on the banks of the stream. In the top section, on the left, a man prepares fish for drying. He opens them with a gesture of precision, by cutting them down the back with the help of a blade of flint or metal.
In the smaller sub-register, at the top, a boy and a craftsman manufacture some ropes, assembling then by twisting them from long fibres of papyrus. These ropes are destined for the manufacture of small boats, of which one sees the successive stages of manufacture below. This work required the involvement of qualified craftsmen, often assisted by their sons, which they progressively train in the technique of shipbuilding. As all apprentices, the young boy starts with small tasks requiring simple handling, as we could guess the surprising conversation between a father and his son: *"O, vigorous boy, bring (me) the ropes"*, orders the craftsman. Challenged, he tightens two rollers, then with these words replies: *"O, father, here is the rope for (you) !"*.

Sixth Register : The marshy zone, bordering the river and the canals, offered refuge and food to many birds which the Egyptians captured using nets and of which several came to enrich the farmyards of the great domain. By the signal given by the chief scribe, Upemneferet, two teams abruptly close the nets and imprisoning many birds, which are then put into a cage.

Seventh Register : The lowest register describes the return of the boatmen who, in a friendly joust, hurry to bring the products of the domain: baskets filled with eggs, poultry, small livestock. On the far left, a middle-aged man is seated in a light craft, partaking of food from a table. He is a favoured friend of Ptahhotep, and he was probably in charge of the decoration of the chapel. The text above him says that he is *"his beloved and trusty mehenkh, the chief sculptor, Ankhenptah"*. Mehenkh is a friendly name given to architects and artists of tombs. With his name being sculpted into the limestone, it guaranteed his survival for eternity, next to the owner. This is an extremely rare fact, because Ankhenptah would then be one of the first Egyptian artists to have "signed" his own work.

The right part (south half)

In perfect symmetry with the north half, the scenes are also distributed on 7 registers, this time only register 4 is subdivided into two half registers. The uppermost register is interupted by a long narrow opening, which allows in both light and ventilation from outside.
Ptahhotep again appears to the right of the registers, again represented full size. This time he wears

a longer black wig and he also wears a false beard, He is clothed as before in a triangular kilt and again holding his long staff of office. The text over his head, this time says that he is *"seeing the tribute, the contributions of the fortresses and cities of the south and north."*.
This time he is preceded by his other "*eldest son, whom he loves; the sab-ad-mer* (i.e., he is also: inspector of canals) *, Akhethotep*", named after his grandfather. This son also grasps his father's staff with one hand, whilst holding the hoopoe bird in the other.
Ptahhotep attends the presentation of the animals captured in the desert - mainly of herbivores, one of which he is going to attempt to domesticate - or raise in the funerary domains, primarily those for cattle.

First Register : Six pairs of youths are wrestling; one bears the name Akhethotep, and may be Ptahhotep's son. To the right, six youths drive a prisoner before them.

Second Register : Four men drag two sledges with cages, containing a lion and a leopard. Next two men with yokes carry bound animals, between them a man carries a gazelle on his shoulders. Finally, Khnemhetep leads his hounds.

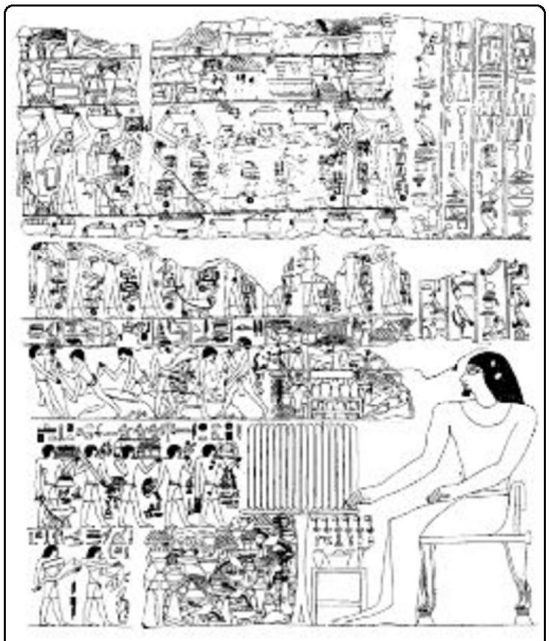
Third Register : This is a continuation of the above scene, with a parade of animals controlled by six men (see 32).

Fourth Register : This contains herdsmen and scenes with cattle, one of which is calving (see top of see 09). The narrow sub-register above contains tethered cattle (see 33).

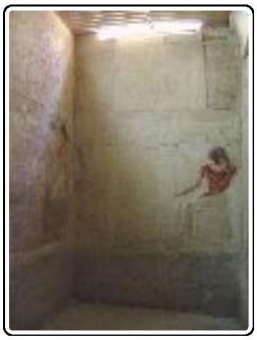
Fifth and Sixth Registers : Various groups of cattle are led or driven before Ptahhotep (see 34, see 09 and see 10).

Seventh Register : The superintendent of the corn store, Kahap, leads a flock of crane. This is followed by two rows, the upper division containing three sorts of geese then a group of swans, the lower division contains ducks, widgeon and pigeons, these are finally followed by chicks. The numbers of each of these birds (numbering in total more than 600,000) is given in the accompanying text.

SOUTH WALL



South Wall
(based on "Tomb of Ptah-Hetep",
ERA, London, 1896, by Paget and Pirie)

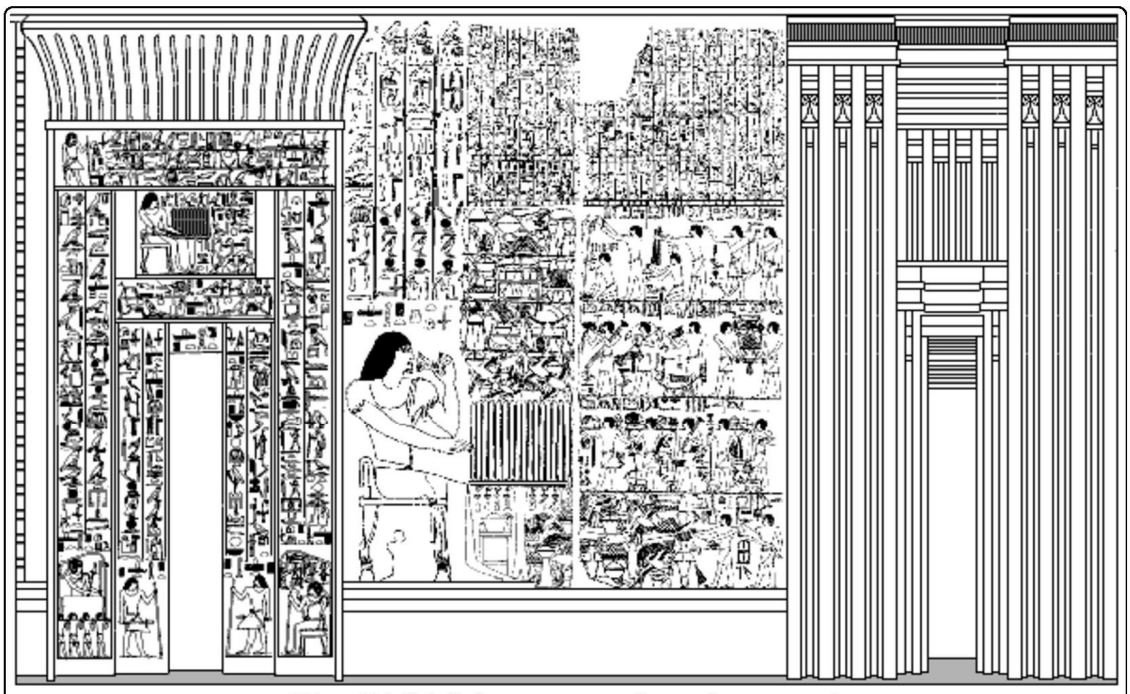


In symmetry with the lower part of the north wall, the south wall also develops a rich theme bound to the production, preparation and presentation of offerings destined for the funerary meal of Ptahhotep represented on the west wall.
As on the east wall, the uppermost register is interupted by a long narrow opening, allowing in both light and ventilation from outside.
In the upper double register an impressive accumulation of food is represented, quintessent of state-owned production.
The second and third registers are dedicated to the parade of young women, allegories of the domains of Ptahhotep. The accompanying descriptions give the names of these domains, and more importantly, the names of the nomes in which they are situated.
The fourth register is given over to scenes of butchering. Over the heads of the butchers are the words spoken by these individuals; such as those over the right-most pair, severing a foreleg, *"Tug hard", "I am doing".*

The fifth and sixth registers is the *"Bringing of offerings by the ka-servants of the chief next to the king, Ptahhotep"*, shown in front of the offering table, on the right of the group. From their titles, these are people of rank, including a canal inspector Ptahhotep (probably the son, shown on the east wall).

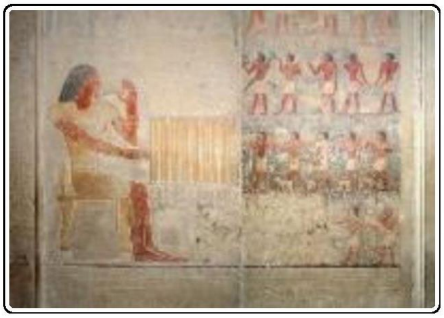
WEST WALL

This wall is formed from two massive limestone blocks, each of which occupies half the wall space. In order to produce the cornice moulding of the left door, the projection of the mouldings and the depth of the inner entries, the whole surface must have been reduced dramatically, and so originally they must have been of considerable thickness. Between the two false-door stelae, which are placed at the extremities of the wall, is located a scene with Ptahhotep seated before a table filled to a great height: the funeral meal of Ptahhotep (see 13). This is the culminating representation of the chapel, its effective implementation validates all the scenes represented on the opposite (east) wall, which are a faithful image of his terrestrial life and a preview of his posthumous future.



West Wall (click on an area for enlargement)
(based on "Tomb of Ptah-Hetep", *ERA, London, 1896, by Paget and Pirie)*

Centre panel, offerings



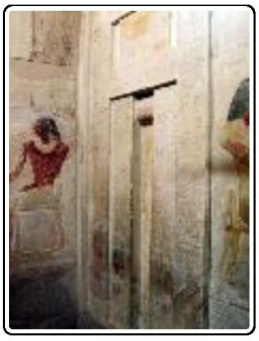
Seated before an amply supplied table of offerings, Ptahhotep is dressed in a panther skin, the tail of which drapes over the seat of his chair and which is fastened by a elegant tie over his left shoulder. He raises up to his face, a vessel containing an ointment of which he breathes the regenerative perfume (see 13).

Above him is an inscribed list giving his titles as priest of the pyramids of Isesi, Niuserre and Menkauhor. Note that Isesi is listed first, even though he followed the others to the throne, thus respectfully indicating that he was the reigning pharaoh of Ptahhotep. The leftmost column lists some of his important ministerial functions.

Also at the top of the centre section between the two false doors is a large tabulated list detailing

the offerings and ceremonies connected with it.
Facing Ptahhotep, on the right-hand side of the offering table, are four registers of officiants. The upper row consist of priests, washing the slab of purification, burning incense and reciting the order of service. The three rows below are of people of a high standing, all bringing offerings to the table of the deceased.
Although the left portion of the lowest register and the items represented under the table are unpainted they are beautifully inscribed (see 15). Directly under the table, either side of the stand, is an abbreviated list of the offerings in *"thousands* (a great many) *of bread, beer, yarn, cloth, oxen, geese and antelopes.*

The left (south) false-door



This false door is entirely inscribed and decorated, summarising on it only the terrestrial career of Ptahhotep, in a complete enumeration of his real and honorary functions (see 04 and see 37). It is topped by a large covetto cornice, below which the whole false door is sculpted in relief.
On clearing the chamber, Davies found on the floor in front of the false door a simple low offering table. It was of a similar stone to that of the lower part of the wall and showed no sign of being inscribed. The fact that it was still embedded into a thin layer of mud, showed that it was *in situ* and original (just visible at the bottom of see 37a). This is in keeping with the false door being the exit for the deceased for his participation in the cult ceremonies and his daily wanderings in the land of the living.

The false door is actually designed as a door within a door, each having an inscribed lintel (the outer one being of a more elaborate design) and door jambs each have two columns of text. Between the two architraves is a broad space almost totally filled with an abbreviated version of the scene of the table of offerings of the central area of this wall.
These four jambs are terminated with Ptahhotep's name and representations of him. The two inner ones are of the usual design, being upright representations. The left outer one shows him being carried in a canopied sedan chair by four porters. The right outer one shows him seated within a similar canopied structure (see 41) ; the text inside, recited by the small image of a priest (now unfortunately missing, but see bottom right of the line drawing), indicates the fact that he will make a daily "tour" of inspection, as befits the deceased.

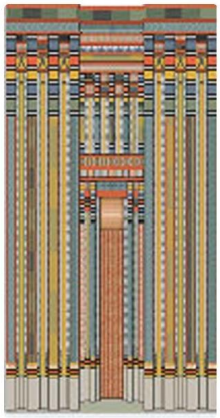
The text of the left outer jamb begins *"Entering his house of eternity in most excellent peace, he being in a state of worthiness before Osiris…".*
The text of the right outer jamb begins *"Crossing the water in most excellent peace…, the taking of his hand by his fathers…".*
The inner jambs contain the usual style text : *"May the King give an offering…".*

The right (north) false-door

This false door is not inscribed, it could however represent a simple passage giving access to annexes of the terrestrial house of Ptahhotep, where one temporarily stored all products destined for the funerary cult of the owner of the tomb. This addition to the conventional false door for comings and goings of the deceased, is unusual. The door is symmetrical in design, the left-hand side being a mirror image of the right.

Originally the structure was colourfully decorated in the extreme. At the time of Davies (the beginning of the 20th century) the fragments of paint still remaining were sufficient to make the artificial restoration almost, if not quite, possible. Using the records left by him I have created the door, in what could have been its original glory (see JJH colour reproduction). For better definition colour detail and indication of the profile, based on those of the Davies publication, see lower right portion and centre right portion. These include all of the patterns used on the false





door and some of which are repeated in other areas than those shown.
It is difficult to see the depth of carved profile from the only modern photograph available, so take advantage of this one, taken over 100 years ago.

In the centre, under the rounded lintel (which may have been the only inscribed portion of the false door bearing the name Ptahhotep), the actual door is represented in a deep recess and painted as if created from narrow planks of wood. On either side, the broader vertical spaces are filled with coloured geometric patterns usually found on matting used for decoration of walls. These "mats" are painted as being held down at the base by cords passed through loops. The narrower spaces are filled with patterns having the appearance of chains, believed to represent actual chains used for raising and lowering the narrow hanging mats. At the bottom these loops fall together in a heap, while above they are stretched fully apart.